



# Polish Profiles

## The Patron Saint of Poland

By: **Kaya Mirecka Ploss**, Ph.D., Executive Director  
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One of the oldest names in Poland is Stanisław. They come in diminutive forms like Stasiu, or Staszek. Men are not the only ones to be named after the Polish Saint Stanisław. I had two female friends, one I called Staszka, the other Stasia.

For a long time I believed that it is a typical Polish name. During my studies in England, I met two people whose name were Stanley. At first I thought that they must be of Polish descent. No, not at all! I came to the conclusion that either there was another St. Stanisław I didn't know about, or the fame of the Polish St. Stanisław reached different countries.

St. Stanisław was born in Szczepanów, near Kraków. His parents, belonging to Poland's nobility, had the means to send their only son Stanisław to be educated in Gniezno. There in that town he was ordained and returned to Kraków, where the Bishop Lambert of Kraków, made Stanisław a Cannon of the Kraków Cathedral.

After the death of Bishop Lambert, Cannon Stanisław took Lamberts place and Stanisław was made Bishop of Kraków. He was a great priest, a reformer and spiritual advisor to King Bolesław the Bold.

King Bolesław was of the Piast Dynasty and indeed was very bold. He was crowned in 1076 with the Pope's approval. As Poland was a Christian nation by then, Papal approval was needed to be crowned King.

Bolesław the Bold was a skillful ruler and a courageous warrior. If it wouldn't have been for his temper, stubbornness and contempt of others, he would have gone down in Polish history as one of the most able rulers. However, he is remembered for more shameful things.

With all his good traits, King Bolesław was a womanizer and it was nothing for him to take a wife of one of his courtiers or noblemen and to bring her into the Palace for his amusements. The public, the noblemen and mostly the Pope, were scandalized by the King's behavior. At first, the Bishop just warned the King and told him about the Pope's displeasure. However, the King just laughed it off. The Bishop of Kraków was forced to threaten the King, that he would be excommunicated if he didn't change his behavior. It outraged King Bolesław. Leading a bunch of henchmen, he ordered them to kill Bishop Stanisław.

They found the Bishop of Kraków at St. Michael's Cathedral giving Mass at the Altar. The henchmen retreated. Even for them it was too much to kill a priest at the Altar. In a fury, the King himself hacked the Bishop to death with his sword. The day was May 8, 1079.

When the Pope learned about it he put the Kingdom of Poland under interdict and declared King Bolesław the Bold's Royalty void, severing all ties with him. The nobles of Poland aligned themselves with the Pope against the King.

In the middle of the night, secretly, King Bolesław with his wife and son escaped from Poland. First they sought refuge in Hungary. In later years, the condemned King went on a pilgrimage to Rome. While on his journey, he stopped at a Benedictine Monastery in Ossiach, Italy. There the King spent his remaining years as a Benedictine lay brother. Only at his deathbed did the King identify himself. He is supposedly buried at the Monastery's Church in Ossiach.

One hundred and fifty four years later, Pope Innocent the IV canonized the martyred Bishop of Kraków in the year 1253. Of all places, the canonization of the Bishop of Kraków took place in Assisi, known for another great Saint, Francis of Assisi.

From that day on, Święty Stanisław became the Patron Saint of Poland. □



## White trash don't travel

By: **Justyna Ball**

Driving on Route 9 through the Brookfields never seems the same. I notice something new every time, and this time, I noticed a brook. It was there for twenty something years, I believe, but I never knew it existed. It might have been because of the trees obstructing the view or, snow, or at other times, Jacek was driving, and I must have been reading or was simply too busy to take notice.

Others may not notice at all, pay no attention or just drive too fast.

And if I had to describe that brook to someone in Poland in the best way possible, I couldn't be sure that the image was translated exactly to the point.

And as you may already know, everything looks different if you look at it from another angle.

So does our Polish(ness) to those who... live in Poland. THEY dine on original Polish home grown food. WE, in US have Millie's "pierogis" from the local supermarket. THEY are those who know their history and culture the best, WE are Poland's ambassadors. THEY can touch history each day by walking along the medieval walls, or hearing the same gothic bells, although WE have the advantage of seeing it from a different perspective. That's a plus - I'm still sure of it.

Last week, I had an "exchange of words" with a fellow who got angry with me, because to him, I represented that dreadful Europe. It happened to me several times before, but with different people, yet the same "accusations. I thought it was strange, because the American press rarely includes Poland on their map, or in Europe's related articles (It does, however, miraculously appear on their radar when the subject of the Holocaust pops up.). Here is this guy, Paul, who blames me for all the evil that supposedly happened to the US because of Europe(?) and I have the audacity to feel no shame or respect to the great American nation, or so I was told.

That Europe - where they hate us. The cradle of all wars.

Yet it was Europe that awarded Martin Luther King Jr. the Nobel Prize in 1964, before he was assassinated in his homeland in 1968.

It was 1989 when Poland defeated Communism and opened the Central and Eastern European markets to the US. However in 2008, the US still demands visas from Poles.

Sixty years after WWII and 20 years after the fall of Communism, and the US presence in Western Europe has less to do with Europe's security and more with the US military industry and its lobby.

The Cold War ended - however, we just need to convince the future Central and Eastern European clients that the threat from Iran and North Korea is real, and that they need to install our anti-missile shields. As soon as we can convince them, we are back in business. So, that evil Europe - ain't that bad after all.

According to Paul, his opinion on collective farms, Poland's economy or history is the "right one." His knowledge is accurate since he was brought up in a free country, and I was not. With a few history related questions, I checked that "knowledge" and found it undoubtedly lacking understanding of the true situation in pre, during, and post war Poland. Some of the world's events like Yalta skipped his memory to make a room for revelations such as the US freeing millions of Poles from Nazi terror. "You Europeans should thank us for it." It seemed that his problem was more with the French, but since there were no French persons anywhere nearby, I somehow represented the old evil.

Whatever happens between you and the French stays between you and French. I can speak for Polish people, and I reminded him that Poland did not benefit from the Marshall Plan and what he called "liberation," to millions of Poles was just the beginning of another chapter in Poland's long fight for independence.

This guy repeated the same old stereotypes that I heard many times before. I could ignore it again and again, but if I have to be part of this great nation, I should have the right to speak up. And he should realize that war may be a different experience to different people.

There are times when Poland, according to some, is this backwards agricultural country. On other occasions, as needed, when talk stirs to the subject of pollution, it is suddenly heavily industrialized. Either way it is negative, so I can never figure out which one it is.

Quite often, pointing out Polish Catholicism sounds more like an accusation. However, it does not bother the accusers, at the same time to call Poland Communist and hoping that the average reader won't know the difference.

It's bad - we got that point.

What is certain is that Poland is full of contradictions. So trying to stereotype it should be a very difficult task unless ... your intentions aren't sincere.

Once I was approached by another "know

*Justyna Ball to page 16*

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## Calendar of Events

**23, Polish Club of Laguna Woods will have a program emphasizing skin health. May has been designated as "Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month". The guest speaker will be Dr. Richard Petyn.**

**24 - May 4, 2008, The Ninth Polish Film Festival** Los Angeles, information: [ajanda@earthlink.net](mailto:ajanda@earthlink.net)

**27, Sat, 25th Anniversary of John Paul II Center in Yorba Linda.**

**May 4 Sun., 4 PM - Special Constitution Day Concert, celebrating the Polish Constitution of May 3, 1791;** SCHOENBERG HALL, UCLA - The performers will feature Julia Gondek, soprano and the USC String Quartet. The program includes works by Karol Szymanowski, Tadeusz Baird, Ludomir Rożycki, Feliks Nowowiejski, Andrzej Panufnik, Stanisław Moniuszko

**21, Polish Club of Laguna Woods will enjoy a bus trip to Forest Lawn, Glendale,** to see Jan Styka's "Crucifixion", the largest religious painting in the world. Jan Styka is a famous Polish artist. We will have lunch at "Polka", a Polish restaurant afterwards we will visit the Griffith Park Observatory.

**27 - Jun 8, Polish Club of Laguna Woods Magical China and the Yangtze River,** 13 day excursion. Info: (949) 206-9122.

**31 Sat. Pasadena Elks Lodge - Commemorating the Anniversary of the Polish Constitution of Mary 3 - "Poland Forever"** - Depictions of famous Poles in history presentation followed by dinner and dancing to the music of the Dave Miron Orchestra. Pasadena Elks Lodge - 400 W. Colorado Blvd. \$55.00 per person donation to the Polish American Congress of Southern California.

**Jun 8, 10:30 am -5:00pm, 9th Proud to be Polish Festival in Yorba Linda.**

**25, Polish Club of Laguna Woods will celebrate summer with a "Family picnic"** in clubhouse 6 at 11 a.m.

**Jul 13 - 1:30 p.m. Our Lady of the Bright Mount Parish Hall - Dzień Braterstwa - Helping Poles who live in the former USSR.** Information and Reservations (323) 857-0208.

**Aug 9 - 23, Summer Camp with Polish Language in Gdańsk, Poland.** Information: [http://polonica.edu.pl/polski\\_oboz\\_jezykowy.html](http://polonica.edu.pl/polski_oboz_jezykowy.html).

**24, 10:30 am - Polish Patriotic Anniversaries of 20th Century in Yorba Linda**

**Oct 1, Celebration of 400th Anniversary of Arrival of First Poles to Jamestown**

**19, 10:30 am - Pope John II Center in Yorba Linda - 30th Anniversary of John Paul II Election to being Pope & 24th Anniversary of Fr. J. Popieluszko's Martyrdom.**

*Please send information for the calendar to Bish Petryka - e-mail: [zbyskoopet@aol.com](mailto:zbyskoopet@aol.com) ★*